

# Plain Talks

Vol. 58, No. 7

Nov/Dec. 1979



## GSU's home: Edison Plaza

Groundbreaking was held December 13 for Edison Plaza, which will have as its centerpiece a 17-story office tower that will be GSU's corporate home when it is completed in 1981.

The ceremonies were held at the site of the new

building, which will be in the block bounded by Tevis, Travis, Pine and Mulberry streets in downtown Beaumont.

Participating in the groundbreaking were Board Chairman Don Crawford; Beaumont Mayor Maurice

Meyers; R. F. DuBois, Jr. president of Central City Development Corporation; and Jack Kennedy and Jim Yarbrough, co-chairmen of Planning Economic Progress (PEP).

The Edison Plaza name was chosen to honor

Thomas Alva Edison, the man responsible for the electrification of the world.

The building will contain about 462,000 square feet, more than three times as many as is found in the present headquarters. The curved quadrant design,

*(continued on page 10)*

# DISCONNECTS

## Pulling the plug on consumer fears

Stories of families living without electricity make big headlines. But behind the headlines is another story — of how utilities work with families to solve financial problems and keep the electricity flowing.

GSU and other utilities don't want to disconnect customers. That is why when payment problems occur, utilities have budget payment plans and other programs that are designed to keep the service turned on.

Why unplug anyone at all? To protect the majority

The percentages vary from utility to utility, but the results of disconnections are generally the same. "We found that 55 percent of those disconnected made arrangements for payment in 24 hours," reveals Don Binsfeld, Wisconsin Power and Light's customer accounting supervisor.

When a customer doesn't pay his bill, for whatever reason, the losses must be absorbed by the paying customers. According to the Edison Electric Institute, the average amount in 1978 was \$3.37 per ratepayer,

Is this a new problem? Hardly. It's as old as the industry itself. But rising fuel prices and double-digit inflation have sharply worsened the situation. Last August, inflation was running at an 11.8 percent annual rate, according to the U.S. Labor Department. Pacing the inflation rate were fuel and housing costs.

Meanwhile the average worker's purchasing power was falling at a 4.2 percent rate. These economic disparities coupled with a near-six percent unemployment rate are reflected in increased disconnection notices.

But Gulf States and other utility companies are trying to help.

One way is by providing budget payment plans. The last 12 months of energy usage are totalled and averaged to determine a fixed monthly bill, which is easier to cope with, in terms of personal budget planning, than widely fluctuating payments.

According to estimates by the Department of Energy's (DOE) Fuel Oil Marketing Advisory Committee, more than 16 million American homes will need some financial assistance this winter. To help meet this need, many utilities offer counseling that helps direct customers to appropriate public assistance programs.

Energy assistance programs designed to reduce the pressures of rising energy costs on the elderly and disabled are available in more than half the 50 states, according to a report by the College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University. Putting needy customers in touch with these programs is what utility counseling is all about.

Customer counseling depends on two key

*(continued on page 11)*

*For a related story on a GSU employee whose job is helping financially troubled consumers maintain their electric service, see page three.*

of customers who do pay their bills. The more non-paying customers a utility carries, the higher the bills will be for those who do pay.

Utilities lose a substantial sum of money because of non-payment. In 1977, uncollectibles added up to \$58.9 million in the electric utility industry and in 1978 the total escalated to \$66.3 million.

Through disconnects, utilities can recover some of this money. "The majority of our customers will come in the day they are disconnected to make arrangements to pay," says Kit Evans, GSU's supervisor of customer accounting. "Turning off the electricity generally gets some action."

up from \$2.96 the previous year.

And that doesn't reflect the added capital charges and collection expenses associated with uncollectables.

Uncollectable accounts mean added administrative costs for paperwork and field visits to customers' homes. While the accounts are outstanding, the utility has to borrow money to carry the non-paying customer. Any revenue lost through uncollectables must, of course, eventually be sought through rate requests.

### Plain Talks

Published for employees and annuitants of Gulf States Utilities Company. Address all communications to Editor, Plain Talks, Gulf States Utilities Company, P. O. Box 2951, Beaumont, Texas 77704.

**Director — Employee Information**  
Ray Funderburk

**Editor**  
Gary Dias

**Associate Editor**  
Susan Huff

**Contributing Editors**  
Rick Harvin  
Kim McMurray

**Artist**  
Ken Haynie

**Correspondents**  
Leslie Jones — Beaumont Service Center  
Earl Landry — Neches Station  
Doris Wallace — Orange  
Bonnie Duval — Sabine Station  
Rose Reeves — Port Arthur  
Nina Wiley — Conroe  
D. W. Rutherford — Lewis Creek  
Anna Raymond — Lake Charles  
**Main Office**  
Edith Patterson — Lake Charles T&D  
Connie Herford — Nelson Station  
Adelaide Bankston — Government Street  
George Weathers — Choctaw  
Shivaun Bourgoyne — North Boulevard  
David Thornhill — Louisiana Station  
Lydia Mitchell — Willow Glen  
Ritchie Yott — Willow Glen  
Bobby Hilborn — River Bend  
Suzanne Taylor — Gas Department



# Dianne Brandon:

## Year 'round Christmas angel

To a lot of financially troubled GSU customers in the Baton Rouge area, Dianne Brandon is a Christmas angel — year 'round.

As consumer affairs coordinator for the company's Baton Rouge division, Brandon works fulltime helping customers who are having trouble paying their GSU electric and gas utility bills. "I try to find ways that are appropriate for each individual," explains Brandon, "usually working within their own means if possible to try to obtain funds, material goods or whatever else I can that will enable them to have more money to pay their utility bills."

"If I can get a customer on food stamps that means he will not have to devote as much of his income toward the purchase of food and will have more money to pay his utility bills."

Brandon's job as GSU's ombudsman of the poor, one of the first of its kind in the nation, is a little less than a year old — the brainchild of a special committee chaired by Mildred Tribble, director-Consumer and Institutional Programs. Actually, the concept for Brandon's job was one of several ideas borrowed from an Edison Electric Institute seminar attended by Tribble and committee members in August, 1978 and recommended to Board Chairman Don Crawford for adoption by GSU.

When Brandon, a 1975 graduate of Louisiana State University with a bachelor's degree in marketing, assumed the newly created position early this year she didn't know what to expect. "I'm the pilot, I guess you'd say," she laughs.

It didn't take Brandon long to discover one thing about her new job, however. It is very rewarding — in a personal way.

"It makes you feel so good when you know you've helped someone. A lot of people just need help to get on their feet."

Brandon works with a number of agencies and groups helping distraught customers find ways to pay their utility bills. These include the Volunteers of America, the Baton Rouge Association for Community Action, the Welfare Department, the Social Security Administration, the Consumer Protection Agency, the Louisiana Department of Human Development and Resources and the Council on Aging — to name a few.

Given full authority over the accounts of the customers she works with, Brandon can reduce or waiver deposits and recommend that a bill be charged off as uncollectable but she says, "I have never done that and I don't think I'd actually do it unless it was absolutely hopeless."

The Volunteers of America and the Baton Rouge Association for Community Action provide a large portion of the financial assistance required in Brandon's cases. And in some instances, Brandon will appeal to local churches. On occasion she has even been able to assist the customer in obtaining employment.

A substantial portion of Brandon's cases involve crisis situations in which the primary breadwinner is ill or injured. "Whenever possible I try to use what resources the customer has to keep the service on because funds are very hard to get.

"If they have income we'll try to figure out a way they can make regular payments on the account — even if it's only a partial payment on

the account to keep it from getting way out of hand."

Welfare recipients who tend to carry balances are a special problem for Brandon — especially those who are about to lose their service because of nonpayment. "They'll get their check on the 16th and one month they'll pay rent and the next month they'll try to catch the balance on their utility bill. The check is not enough to cover all the expenses," explains Brandon.

When these customers receive a disconnection notice several days before their welfare check arrives, they turn to Dianne Brandon

*(continued on page nine)*

Brandon works to help another customer solve a problem





## GSU files for La. rate hike

The company has filed a petition with the Louisiana Public Service Commission (LPSC) for an electric service rate increase of \$98.9 million in Louisiana.

The request represents an increase of approximately 25 percent in revenues from GSU's 238,000 Louisiana customers.

Announcing the filing, board chairman Don Crawford said, "the company is well aware that everyone is being hard hit by inflation and rising energy costs.

"But the circumstances are that we must have this increase if GSU is to meet its obligation of maintaining reliable electric service in Louisiana."

Crawford pointed to inflation, high interest rates, costs of complying with excessive federal regulation and the necessity to build expensive generating plants fueled by coal, lignite or nuclear power as prime reasons for the rate increase request.

Federal regulation forbids Gulf States from building any more natural gas or oil burning power plants. Plants using alternate fuels are three to five times more expensive.

Crawford said rate increases are the only way Gulf States can cover its current costs of doing business and develop an earnings trend that will attract investors to finance the more than \$2 billion the company plans to spend on building generating units in the next six years.

## GSU board elects two new officers



Humphreys Weigand Ogden

The GSU board of directors has promoted one officer and elected two new officers.

Effective January 1, 1980, senior vice president L. L. Humphreys is promoted to

executive vice president-River Bend Nuclear Group and Dr. J. G. Weigand is elected vice president-River Bend Operations and Technical Systems.

The board also elected Leslie D. Ogden corporate secretary effective December 16. Ogden, executive secretary to the chairman of the board for the past five years and a 24-year veteran, replaces Patricia Broussard who has accepted a vice presidential position with a major New York bank.

## Experimental rates in Texas

Two experimental electric rates have been instituted for the company's residential customers in Texas.

The new rates are meant to benefit low usage customers and customers who install solar water or space heating units to supplement existing electric water or space heating units.

On that basis the customer will save money in electricity not used and receive a credit on his bill.

Since these rates are experimental and can be rescinded by the PUCT, a person should not install solar heating systems solely on the present economics created by this new rate.

The rates were developed in a negotiated rate case settlement during the summer and approved by the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUCT) Nov. 27. Both the PUCT commissioners and GSU's senior vice president of rates and economics Thomas H. Burbank emphasized the new rates are strictly experimental and their effects will be carefully studied by the company and the commission. The studies will determine if the new rates do what is intended and if they should remain in effect.

The low usage rate is based on the cost difference between the winter and summer electric rates. Summer rates, in effect from June to October, are one half cent per kilowatthour higher than winter rates. Under the new rate customers are charged the cheaper winter rate during the summer months if the customer uses 500 kilowatthours or less per month. It would provide

a maximum savings of \$2.50 per month.

For any summer month that the customer uses more than 500 kwh, he would be billed at the normal summer rate for the entire month. Average residential electric consumption for GSU customers is more than 1000 kwh per month.

Burbank said the company is not sure the rate will benefit those for whom it is intended. He said it may have greater benefit to those who have vacation or beach houses. However, he said the company agreed to study the rate to see if it will provide any benefits to low income customers.

The second rate includes a "solar credit" for Texas residential customers who install solar heating devices to supplement existing electric heating systems. The credit will also apply to new residential construction.

GSU will estimate the kilowatthours saved by having such a unit installed and will credit the customer on his bill monthly. The credit is based on the cost of fuel GSU will not have to purchase to supply electricity for that heating. The company estimates that will be about one cent per kilowatthour.

## River Bend Group formed

The board of directors has approved the formation of the River Bend Nuclear Group, a new long term technical and operating group, effective January 1.

The group is charged with the responsibility of insuring that the River Bend Nuclear Generating Station is constructed and placed into commercial operation, consistent with the company's schedule requirements and in accordance with all applicable rules of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC).

The board's decision is based on the high cost associated with constructing a nuclear unit; the optimization of GSU's management of the nuclear unit; the need to isolate, control and identify all costs for our participants in the Project and the increasing pressure of the regulatory and environmental requirements.

## Watson wins S.E.E. award

Becky Watson, consumer service representative in Lake Charles, recently completed a two-year research project which won first place in the 1979 Energy Efficiency Contest sponsored by the Southeastern Electric Exchange (S.E.E.)

Her entry, *Residential Retrofit Research Project*, is based on a study completed earlier this year of a group of homes retrofitted to GSU recommendations.

"The purpose of this project is to measure specific savings in relationship to the type of conservation measures taken," said Watson, adding that the study proves that certain conservation methods are more monetarily rewarding to the consumer than others.

"As a result, we are more knowledgeable in guiding customers in energy conservation."



Watson talks with project homeowner

Among energy saving measures taken by the homeowners were insulation, caulking and weatherstripping to reduce air infiltration; storm windows; and protective treatment of solar glass areas. Energy consumption of each home was monitored for the 12 months prior to retrofitting and again for 12 months after retrofitting.

Watson accepted the award and gave a presentation on her project at the S.E.E. Marketing Division Conference in Charlotte, North Carolina November 1.



## GSU sponsors science conference

Several hundred elementary and high school science teachers from throughout Louisiana participated in a two-day "Centennial of Light" science conference sponsored by GSU December 6-7 at the Louisiana State University campus in Baton Rouge.

GSU's sponsorship of the Thomas Alva Edison Foundation's 19th science education conference was in partnership with the Foundation, the Louisiana Department of Education and LSU.

Participating teachers were selected by the Department of Education from parish, city and parochial school systems throughout the State, as well as from LSU's laboratory school.

Leading scientists and educators from around the country conducted sessions on a wide range of topics including "Lucky Accidents, Great Discoveries and the Prepared Mind" (Dr. Hubert Alyea, Princeton University); "The Alaskan Pipeline and Sohio — An Energy Case History" (John R. Miller, vice president, Standard Oil); "Genetic Engineering" (Dr. Roger Milkman, University of Iowa) and "Technology of Modern Heart Surgery" (Dr. Adrian Kantrowitz, chief of cardiovascular surgery at Sinai Hospital).

Also participating in the conference were Board Chairman Don Crawford, Dr. Paul Murrill, chancellor LSU and a member of the GSU board of directors, and Dr. Linn Draper, technical assistant to the chairman of the board and a nationally recognized nuclear spokesman.

## Company files for gas rate hike

GSU filed for a gas rate increase November 9 that, if granted, will raise the average residential customer's bill between 85 and 90 cents per month or about three cents a day.

The \$3.4 million increase, the first hike in retail gas rates requested by GSU since 1975, would affect the company's 83,600 residential, commercial and industrial natural gas customers in the Baton Rouge area.

GSU documents filed with the Louisiana Public Service Commission (LPSC) reveal a financial loss of the company's natural gas operations.

"The data filed show that Gulf States will not even make enough return on its gas business to cover its interest charges," said board chairman Don Crawford.

Crawford said that the 12 percent increase is necessary to provide adequate natural gas service in the Baton Rouge area and receive a fair return on investment.

## Employee to head new women's club



Joe Ann Vezina (right), general clerk in System Accounting, accepts the charter for the newly-organized Golden Triangle Business and Professional Women's Club during installation ceremonies in mid-October. Lunelle A. Anderson (left), president of the Texas Federation for Business and Professional Women, presented the charter to Vezina, who was installed as president of the new organization. The club is made up of a cross section of women in professional and blue collar occupations, ranging in age from their 20s to 40s.

## GSU scholarships awarded freshmen

Two Lamar University electrical engineering students are the first scholarship recipients under GSU's new cooperative scholarship program.

Freshman Gary Miller of Bridge City and Michael Montanari of Conroe were selected from several applicants for the scholastic honor, which will be awarded in the form of \$800 per year per person for both the first and fifth years of study in the engineering program. Lamar University will receive \$200 per

person per year for administering the program.

During their middle three years of study, the young men will alternate semesters of on-campus study with semesters of work as cooperative employees of Gulf States.

Montanari, a graduate of Conroe High School, is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth J. Montanari. Miller, a graduate of Bridge City High School, is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur N. Miller.

According to Jim Atkins, GSU's manager of employment, the awards will be presented on an annual basis. This year's selection was made from freshman engineering students at Lamar. In the future, the recipients will be high school seniors who plan to enter either electrical engineering or mechanical engineering. Recipients must attend Lamar University, where they must maintain a grade point average of at least 2.5.

## Clements issues proclamation

Texas Governor William P. Clements issued an official proclamation in November commemorating the Centennial of Light, a year-long international celebration marking the 100th anniversary of Thomas Alva Edison's invention of the first successful incandescent electric light bulb in 1879.

"More than any other, this invention ushered in the Age of Electricity and changed the course of human history," stated Clements in the proclamation.

In another portion of the proclamation, Clements said, "... as we enter the second century of light, we should also commit ourselves to creating an atmosphere in which new Edisons can flourish. In doing so, we will not only preserve Edison's legacy, but expand it as well for ourselves and for future generations."

The Centennial of Light celebration continues through the end of 1979.

## House defeats nuclear ban

The U.S. House of Representatives defeated a proposed moratorium on construction of new nuclear power plants November 29 by a vote of 254-135.

The proposed amendment to the \$426.7 million NRC authorization bill would have prohibited issuance of nuclear power plant construction permits until April, 1980.

The Senate defeated a similar proposal earlier.

## Article labels solar threatening

According to an article in the December 3 issue of *Newsweek* magazine, solar energy is potentially the most polluting and ecologically threatening form of commercial power being proposed in the world today.

The author, Donald C. Winston, associate editor of *London Oil Reports*, writes "... the entire estimated U.S. power requirement for the year 2000 could be met by covering an area equivalent to that of the state of Oregon with solar collectors. Or less extreme, all existing and projected nuclear power plants for the year 2000 could be replaced by solar collectors covering a much smaller area — approximately that of West Virginia."

In addition, says Winston, direct conversion photovoltaic cells will contain large amounts of conducting, semiconducting and nonconducting materials of varying availability on the world markets. These materials include cadmium, silicon, germanium, selenium, gallium, copper, arsenic, sulfur. "Thermal conversion units will be made of thousands of tons of glass, plastics and rubber," he continues, "and will house uncommonly great volumes of ethylene glycol, liquid metals, Freon and/or other heat movers."

"If we settle on cadmium-sulfide cells for direct photovoltaic conversion, for instance, it would require the entire 1978 world production of cadmium to produce only 180,000 megawatts of installed capacity, or about 10 percent of the capacity the world had in place last year," says Winston, pointing out that the U.S. had to import 63 percent of its cadmium last year.

"Will a cadmium cartel arise if we go solar, jacking up the price to whatever the traffic will bear," he asks? "Ask the same question for germanium or any of the other exotic materials that will be required."



## 40 Years



**C. H. Beaumont**  
Electric T&D Dept.  
Port Arthur



**F. L. Davis**  
Electric T&D Dept.  
Beaumont

## 30 Years



**J. Brooks Bishop, Jr.**  
Sys. Marketing Dept.  
Beaumont



**Joseph R. Bonaventure**  
Gas Department  
Baton Rouge



**Gerald O. Dean**  
Adm. Sys.  
Beaumont



**Robert A. Giroir**  
Division Production  
Baton Rouge



**Leal Hall, Jr.**  
Div. Acctg. Dept.  
Cleveland



**Henry Legnon, Jr.**  
Div. Accounting Dept.  
Lafayette

## 20 Years



**Jo Ann L. Burnett**  
Division Operations  
Lake Charles



**Thomas W. Falls**  
Electric T&D Dept.  
Lake Charles



**Darrell W. Goodwin**  
Electric T&D Dept.  
Jennings



**Gilbert W. Hiter**  
Electric T&D Dept.  
Baton Rouge



**Van N. Kitchens, Jr.**  
Electric T&D Dept.  
Orange



**William D. Parker**  
Div. Accounting Dept.  
Port Arthur

## 10 Years



**Earl Blackwelder**  
Electric T&D Dept.  
Sulphur



**Joseph E. Budd**  
Sys. Eng. Real Estate  
Beaumont



**Clinton Gibson**  
Electric T&D Dept.  
Baton Rouge



**James B. Griscom**  
Electric T&D Dept.  
Baton Rouge



**Bobby J. Guidry**  
Electric T&D Dept.  
Lafayette



**Anthony Harris**  
Electric T&D Dept.  
Beaumont



**Judith F. Waldrep**  
Div. Acctg. Dept.  
Mid County





**Camille Miller**  
Electric T&D Dept.  
Jennings



**Robert J. Summers**  
Legal Services  
Beaumont



**Milton H. Pharr**  
Division Production  
Lake Charles



**Derrick D. Smith**  
Division Production  
Lake Charles



**Dallie L. Starns**  
Electric T&D Dept.  
Baton Rouge



**Lee C. Terro**  
Electric T&D Dept.  
Port Arthur



**Clifford K. Welch**  
Division Production  
Lake Charles



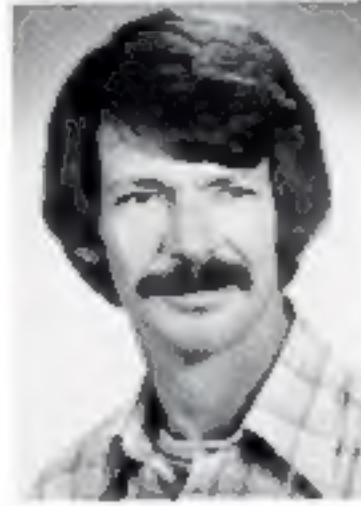
**Walter V. Williams**  
Electric T&D Dept.  
Beaumont



**Robert Hebert**  
Div. Acctg. Dept.  
Lafayette



**Linda E. Judice**  
Electric T&D Dept.  
Port Arthur



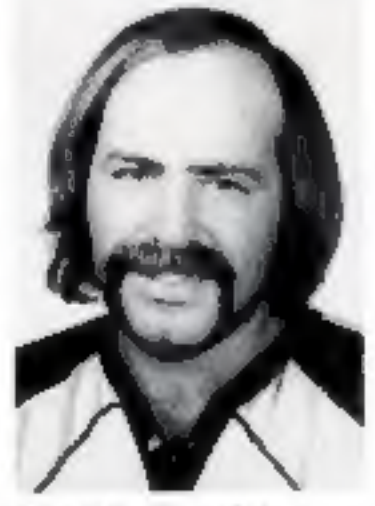
**Joseph G. Reine, Jr.**  
Electric T&D Dept.  
Baton Rouge



**James W. Simpson**  
Material Servs. Dept.  
Beaumont



**Iris S. Stanfield**  
Executive Dept.  
Beaumont



**David P. Trosclair**  
Electric T&D Dept.  
Lake Charles



## Fair and fun day

It was a great old-fashioned fair — with carnival rides, space walk, games, prizes, food and soft drinks. But in one way it differed from the fairs we knew as kids — this one was all free!



The Lake Charles Division Safety Fair and Family Fun Day was held at Burton Coliseum Saturday, October 6 for employees and their families. It was an exciting day for the kiddies with balloons, cotton candy, snow cones, candied apples, bucket truck rides, games and prizes and the "dunking machine" that sent the bosses for frequent "swims".

On the serious side, valuable safety information was conveyed via interesting demonstrations and films at the activity booths.

— Anna Raymond

## Sabine boiler class

Sabine #5, the company's 480 megawatt gas-fired unit at Sabine Station, is nearly complete and plant employees have been busily preparing for it to come on line. Among preparations in recent months



Employee Glenn Ray, cameraman, records the three-day boiler class on film. Clovis Harris is in the foreground.

was a three-day class on the operation of the new unit's boiler conducted by Combustion Engineering representative Tom Kinkade.

Some 40 persons attended the classes on October 9, 10 and 11 as each department sent as many employees as possible. The classes were videotaped in their entirety for those who could not attend.

—Bonnie Duvall

## Bodemann transferred



Western Division employees bade farewell to Leroy and Gloria Bodemann at a going-away party October 26. Bodemann, Conroe T&D operating superintendent, was transferred to Beaumont as assistant to the engineering manager — System Engineering. He received several gifts including an AM-FM radio and tape player, a tape recorder and a pocket calculator.

## Golf tourney held

It was a beautiful day for a golf tournament and that's exactly what the Port Arthur Division employees did.

The Lesser Port Arthur Shut, a take-off on the Greater Hartford Open, was held at the Pleasure Island golf course October 20, prompted by the success of the first tournament, the Hackers' Invitational, held in July.

First place winners were Rufus Mier, D. P. Lyons, Mervin Hebert and Rick Joffrion. Honors for second place went to Kent Girouard, Jim Minner, Arden Loughmiller and L. C. Boudreaux. Ronnie Carlin, Craig Lee and Keith LeBlanc finished in third place. Low gross went to Jim DuBose.

— Rose Reeves

## Appreciative customer



"I told the customer I would call her back and I did," explains Dianna Winkleman senior clerk in the New Caney office. The lovely green plant came with a card that read "in appreciation for trying to help me and returning my call."

— Nina Wiley

## Problem solved

Electrical problems on mobile equipment such as aerial baskets, derrick trucks and combination line trucks, have plagued utility companies for years.

The problems stemmed from people who install or remanufacture the equipment for the utility companies. Switches were planted at any location they could find to plant one on the dash and would be wired to just any source that they could find.

We solved our problem by providing a wiring panel for all the switches, circuit breakers, hour meters and pilot lights. This panel was fed with wire of the proper size for the added load on the panel. However, the dashboard design on General Motors trucks created a problem. There is no place to locate a panel under the dashboard so we had to fabricate a panel of aluminum sheet that would fit over the contour of the dash board. This created a safety hazard because the padded dash was no longer effective.

We are thankful for employees like Larry Kinnison in the Lake Charles System Garage. It was through his caring that he came up with the idea to build this panel into the heater duct which flows air to the driver's feet. This procedure saved about \$9.50 on material and about six manhours.

Listen around your work area. There may be another Larry Kinnison with another great idea.

— Patrick C. Moore  
System Garage Foreman

## Retirements

John R. Flynt, serviceman first class — Huntsville T&D Service, on November 1.

Andrew J. Triplett, garage mechanic third class — Baton Rouge T&D Garage, on November 1.

Oleon W. Reeves, lineman first class — Baton Rouge T&D Line, on December 1.

## Sheffield leaves Silsbee



A big sendoff was given Robert Sheffield, superintendent — Silsbee, on his transfer to Beaumont as superintendent — Consumer Services for the Beaumont Division. Silsbee employees honored Sheffield with a cake, gifts and Sheffield's favorite — watermelon. A "Sheffield Roast" with Robert as the guest of honor was attended by all employees.

## Smith honored



Oscar Smith, utility worker II in the Lake Charles Treasury Department, retired October 1 after more than 31 years service. Friends and co-workers honored him with cake and punch at the Lake Charles downtown auditorium September 27. His wife,



Gussie, watched (and helped) as he opened gifts. "It will be good to have him at home with me," she smiled.

—Anna Raymond

## The one that didn't get away



This seven-pound speckled trout was hooked near an oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico near Sabine Pass, Texas. The fishermen are (from left) Ted Meinscher, Port Arthur Division vice president, Tom Clark, Consumer Services supervisor in Port Arthur and Rufus Mier, Port Arthur Consumer Services superintendent.

—Rose Reeves

## Safety dinner

Safety is worthwhile in itself, but when it is rewarded as it was in Lake Charles September 14, there is an added incentive for an extra special safety effort.

The Lake Charles Six Months of Safety dinner was held at the Knights of Columbus Hall. Some 200 employees and spouses from the Lake Charles downtown office and T&D, who were on the winning safety teams and had no chargeable accidents



Lloyd "Slim" Frederick, Lake Charles Service Department, prepares to enjoy some of Chef Derby's cuisine.

during the contest period from January 1 through June 30, 1979, enjoyed a delicious barbeque meal prepared by "Chef" Derby (Robert Derby, general substation foreman).

In addition to the excellent meal, the contest winners received bonus safety points.

The second half year contest is nearly over. Let's all be safe during the remaining weeks of the year so we won't miss the next party!!!

—Anna Raymond

## Pohl transferred



Bob Pohl, division engineer — Lake Charles T&D, was given a congratulations and going-away party October 19 by co-workers. He is shown above with his parting gift — a colonial pistol kit. Pohl was transferred to Beaumont and promoted to chief engineer of Relay and Communications.

## River Bend



Work is underway on the River Bend 500 KV substation at the future site of the River Bend Nuclear Generating Station near Baton Rouge. Members of the Baton Rouge substation crew pictured above are (from left) F. J. Daigle, G. S. Farris, L. C. Ivy, C. A. Dehart and W. P. Withers.

—Adelaide Bankston

## Deaths

James Lombard, retired, died October 24.

Fain S. Roby, supervisor-Technical Services, Engineering Design (Beaumont), died October 26.

## Brandon

(from page three)

for an extension until the check arrives.

The large number of disconnection notices issued each month prohibits Brandon from looking at each of them individually. "What I usually get are the severe cases. Some of the referrals that come in could really be handled by the credit department but," says Brandon, "people know of me and know that I am here to help. And if I can, I will."

Poor budgeting skills are responsible for a number of the financial problems Brandon encounters. The Department of Human Development and Resources works with some of these people but the severe cases are referred to Family Debt counselors.

Perhaps the most difficult cases for Brandon are the ones involving senior citizens. "In a lot of cases I don't know if I can help," she says. "They (seniors) need ongoing assistance."

"The elderly are a special problem because most of them would rather do without food, clothing, medicine, or whatever they can to pay their utility bills. And they rarely get behind. They can't stand the idea of not being able to pay their bill."

In some instances we've gotten special donations for them or I've talked to a relative and asked for a contribution toward the bill.

"There isn't an easy solution to their problem."

Despite all the problems, Brandon is able to resolve almost all the cases she takes on. "Sometimes formal arrangements are made and sometimes it's just an arrangement between the customer and myself," says Brandon. "We'll work month by month."

Brandon tells of a case in which the husband suffered a severe heart attack, three additional heart attacks and amputation of both legs. His wife was employed but her income was not enough to pay the bills until the Social Security Administration processed his application for disability. Brandon was able to help and when the account was paid in full the woman came to the office and expressed her appreciation.

And there are many others just as grateful for the assistance Brandon renders. Writes one customer: "Thank God there are still some people that have compassion for other people in trouble."

"What I try to do," says Brandon smiling, "is work with the customer and take his point of view."

"I'm here to let people know we are concerned. For so long utilities were viewed as cold and heartless."

But as Dianne Brandon demonstrates daily, "we are willing to go the extra mile."

Gary Dias



## GSU's new home

(from page one)

although aesthetically attractive, was chosen primarily because of its efficiency. While most high-rise office buildings have 60 percent of their space used efficiently, the Edison Plaza structure will be at the 85 percent level.

The eight passenger elevators and other non-work areas will be confined to one corner of the building. An "open area" office design, which utilizes portable room dividers, will allow GSU departments to relocate or reorganize without extensive and costly remodeling work.

The building's electrical, lighting, cooling and heating systems will be among the most modern and energy efficient anywhere.

Original plans called for an employee cafeteria to be located in the old Tevis Street power plant adjacent to the site of the new building. For cost reasons, the cafeteria has been moved to the first floor of the new building, although it is expected that a suitable and economical use will be found for the old power plant.

A two-story parking garage will be located on the block north of the new building.

Edison Plaza will be the first project built under the new Planning Economic Progress (PEP) program, a joint commitment by management and labor to improve communications in an effort to identify and solve problems before they get out of hand.

Project manager and general contractor is Beck/Mayan Co. of Houston. Principal architect is S. I. Morris Associates of Houston, with George Ingram

and Associates of Beaumont as associate architect.

The firm of Walter P. Moore and Associates is the structural engineer, while Cook and Holle of Houston is handling mechanical and

electrical engineering. Emde Co. of Houston is mechanical consultant and Britain Electric Co. of Houston is electrical consultant. Southwestern Laboratories is handling site preparation

and testing.

Although GSU will be the major tenant in the new building, the company will not own it. An announcement concerning ownership will be made in early 1980.

## Move to 22-story skyscraper marks another milestone in our history

It was a milestone for Gulf States Utilities, as the employees in the company's Beaumont offices moved across Liberty Avenue to the new offices, located in the former Edson Hotel. The headline shown above appeared in the August, 1957, issue of *Plain Talks*, as the move was accomplished on August 9 of that year. Three days later, the new office officially opened for business.

That "new" office is now a bit older, by more than two decades, and it will soon be replaced by an even "newer" building. A look back now seems appropriate.

Of course, the Edson Hotel was not the first office space for GSU in Beaumont. One of the company's forerunners, the Beaumont Ice, Light and Refrigerating Company had its headquarters on Cypress Street, near the Neches River. Then, when the oil boom hit the city in 1901, the Company moved into the downstairs portion of the V. Weiss Building, on the north side of Tevis Street, near Pine Street.

1909 saw the GSU offices moved to Pearl Street. Then, a few years later, the offices were again relocated, this time to the old Interurban Building on Liberty. It was here the main office remained until the move to the Edson Hotel in 1957.

The previously mentioned *Plain Talks* article had this to say about the then-new office: "While we haven't altered the skyline of Beaumont, it should be a source of real pride to all Gulf Staters that our general offices are now housed in a modern skyscraper building . . . which 300 Gulf Staters now call home."

If the small number of employees sounds interesting, try these other facts and figures about the hotel-turned-office:

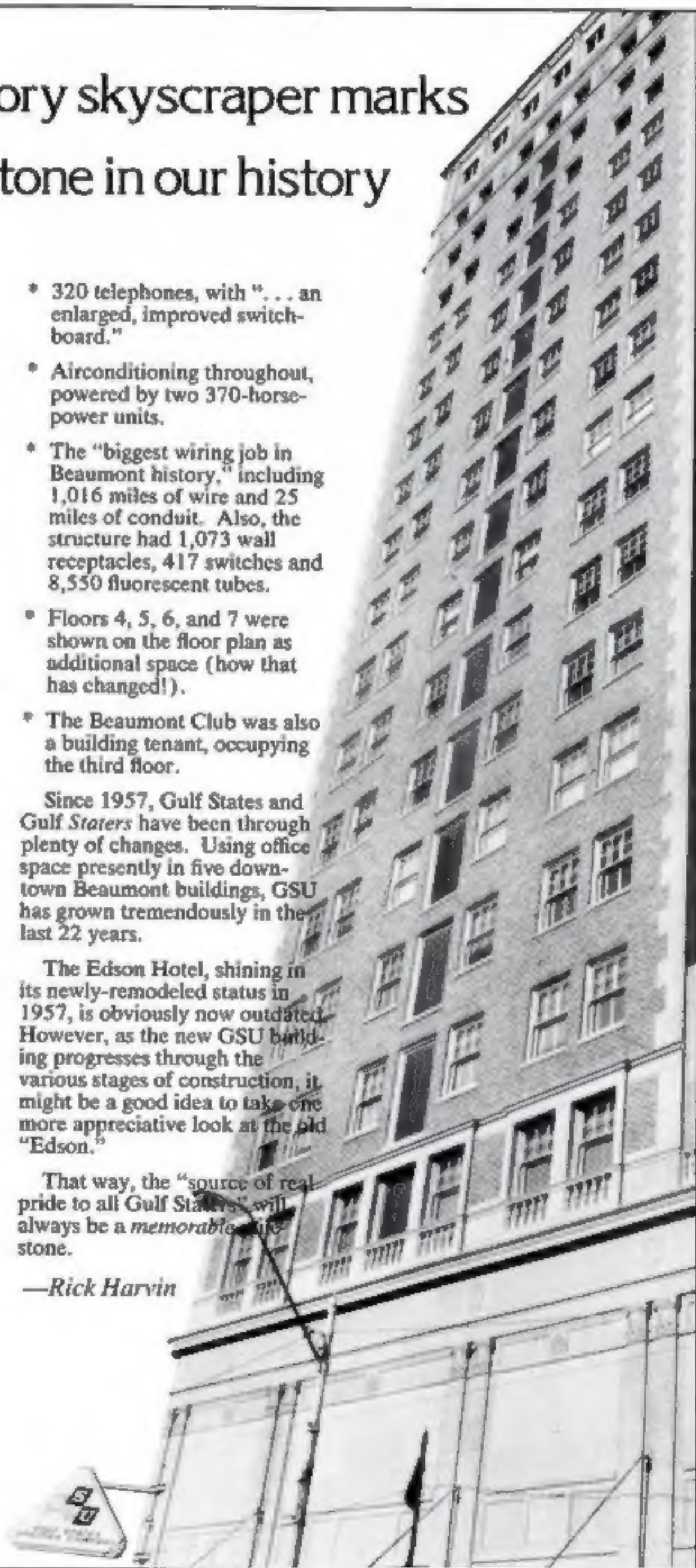
- \* 320 telephones, with "... an enlarged, improved switch-board."
- \* Airconditioning throughout, powered by two 370-horsepower units.
- \* The "biggest wiring job in Beaumont history," including 1,016 miles of wire and 25 miles of conduit. Also, the structure had 1,073 wall receptacles, 417 switches and 8,550 fluorescent tubes.
- \* Floors 4, 5, 6, and 7 were shown on the floor plan as additional space (how that has changed!).
- \* The Beaumont Club was also a building tenant, occupying the third floor.

Since 1957, Gulf States and Gulf Staters have been through plenty of changes. Using office space presently in five downtown Beaumont buildings, GSU has grown tremendously in the last 22 years.

The Edson Hotel, shining in its newly-modeled status in 1957, is obviously now outdated. However, as the new GSU building progresses through the various stages of construction, it might be a good idea to take one more appreciative look at the old "Edson."

That way, the "source of real pride to all Gulf Staters" will always be a memorable milestone.

—Rick Harvin





## Disconnects

(from page two)

elements: Cooperative customers and sufficient social service agency funds. Eliminating either means a problem could go unresolved.

Some utilities encourage customers to designate a third party who will receive a copy of the disconnection notice sent to the ratepayer. The third party isn't obligated to pay the bill but merely to help the customer arrange for some sort of payment if possible. This plan can be especially helpful to the elderly or handicapped who might not understand a disconnection notice or who unwittingly overlook their bills. The children of elderly or infirm parents who live at some distance can find third party notification especially reassuring.

A more drastic approach is the adoption of lifeline rates, which guarantee needy citizens a minimum number of kilowatthours of electricity either at a low, fixed rate or free.

Lifeline rates are advocated by consumer groups who believe that everyone in today's society is entitled to enough electricity to take care of basic necessities such as lighting and refrigeration. Lifeline, however, raises two important

questions: who foots the bill and how can the plan be made equitable?

Contrary to popular belief, the poor do not use less electricity. In fact, there's no direct correlation between electricity consumption and income. Research by the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUCT) demonstrates that an affluent working couple who frequently leave their well-insulated home to patronize restaurants and theatres would be more likely to benefit from a lifeline rate than a poor or elderly couple who use more electricity because they eat at home and rely on television for entertainment.

In Louisiana, the state hopes to appropriate funds to pay 25 percent of the first 600 kilowatthours, about \$6 a month per qualified recipient. Anyone 65 or older and eligible for Medicaid will be eligible to apply. GSU and other utilities in the state will submit a voucher to the state for reimbursement. Cost to the state is estimated at \$1.8 million the first year.

Service termination is usually the last resort. And, even then, extensions are sometimes granted before service is turned off.

Testifying at DOE hearings on *Voluntary Guidelines for Procedures for Termination of Electric and Natural Gas Service*, T. G. Franklin, GSU director of division accounting services, said "Gulf States Utilities gives its customers enough advance notice for them to respond if they wish. In addition, we try to visit the customer personally in order to collect what is due and avoid service termination. The individuals who perform this duty are trained to be able to grant extensions if the circumstances warrant it. They grant such extensions if life-saving equipment is in use, if the household has a recovering patient, or if there are unusual conditions which prevented payment of the bill.

"If no one is at home when we come to collect, our personnel leave a 24-hour notice and call back two days later if no payment or arrangements have been made."

With all the avenues of aid available why do customers still default on their utility bills? According to a survey of utilities by *Electrical World* magazine, some customers think it's okay to rip off the utility. Or perhaps, suggests one utility official, some are just too proud to take advantage of the help that is available.

So what's the answer? As many utility leaders see it, the problem is largely a societal one that should be handled similarly to other social problems, such as unemployment and medical care. This means providing government funds to help the needy with their energy bills.

Direct payment of funds to the customer, however, could place the needy in what one senator calls a "heat or eat" situation. The money might not be used for its intended purpose and if funds are tied to existing programs, such as social security or food stamps, they may not reach everyone in need.

A number of congressmen as well as utility industry leaders favor payments to the energy supplier rather than the customer. This would guarantee payment of any energy bills, eliminating any "heat or eat" choices.

Legislation now being developed may ultimately put an end to disconnects. But until such programs are written into law, GSU and other utilities are doing all they can to keep the electricity flowing — for everyone.



# The electric companies agree with the Kemeny Commission's message on nuclear power: proceed, but proceed with caution.

Immediately after the Three Mile Island accident, the electric utilities of this country established a special committee, representing all segments of the industry, to be sure that the lessons to be learned from the accident were quickly identified and promptly applied.

The report and recommendations of the Kemeny Commission have just been issued. Obviously, there are many detailed and far-reaching proposals which will need to be studied carefully and which we will want to comment upon promptly and publicly.

At this time, we want to share with you our first reactions, particularly to those portions of the recommendations that apply directly to our industry and the operators who work for our organizations—those areas over which we have specific responsibility and control.

## Improving safety is crucial.

First, it is important to state that we agree with the Commission that "the improvement of safety of existing and planned nuclear plants is the crucial issue."

We agree that to achieve this goal it will be necessary to have a significant change in attitude among people in utilities, regulatory agencies and the equipment manufacturers and suppliers. We believe that such a change in attitude is, in fact, taking place in our industry. The Three Mile Island accident has resulted in a reexamination by our people of the safety of nuclear plant operations. As the Commission states, the safety record of the industry was such that many of us had become complacent. During the past six months, we have been working diligently to put in place programs that will assure that a higher level of safety consciousness will be maintained. The Kemeny report recommendations, the results of industry studies and recommendations from other review groups will be considered in these programs for improving safety.

## Industry efforts well under way.

The Commission makes six recommendations for action by utilities and their suppliers. As an industry, we agree with all of these recommendations. Through the Nuclear Safety Analysis Center, established in April of this year, and other industry organizations, we have made a significant start in the systematic gathering, review and analysis of nuclear plant operating experience that the Commission urges.

The Commission has made four recommendations for the training of operating personnel. We concur in all these recommendations. It is our intent that the newly-established Institute for Nuclear Power Operations (INPO) will be the principal vehicle for carrying out these recommendations. INPO has been incorporated, its Board of Directors has been named and an active search is under way for a president of the organization. We are pleased that the Commission recognized our intent in establishing this organization.

In its report, the Commission pointed out that it "had to face the issue of what should be done in the interim with plants that are currently operating and those that are going through the

licensing process." We note that, having faced that issue, the Commission did not find that presently operating plants constitute an unacceptable risk to the public or that they should be shut down. We agree with the Kemeny Commission's unanimous position that the NRC or its successor in issuing new construction permits or operating licenses should do so on "a case-by-case basis."

## Quality, not quantity, of regulations is key.

We are pleased that, based on its study, the Kemeny Commission concluded "that in spite of serious damage to the (TMI) plant, most of the radiation was contained, and the actual release will have negligible effect on the physical health of individuals."

We agree with the Commission that the quality, rather than the quantity, of regulation applied to nuclear power needs to be improved. The Commission has specific suggestions that will need to be analyzed with care, and we have asked the appropriate industry groups to do so promptly.

There is a need for urgency on the parts of all of us concerned with the future of nuclear power. We agree that structural changes are needed. The process of change should be expeditious but not disruptive to the supply of energy to consumers.

## Nuclear power essential in U.S. energy mix.

Nuclear power represents 13 percent of the electricity supplied to the people of this country. It is an essential element in our energy mix, today and in the future. The issue of whether or not there should be a moratorium on the construction of additional nuclear plants was thoroughly debated in the Commission, and a multitude of options were addressed and discussed. The final decision was that a moratorium would not be in the national interest. We agree with the conclusion.

It is worth noting that there are nearly 100 nuclear power plants for which construction permits have been issued and roughly 30 additional units that are awaiting construction permits. When these plants are added to the 72 reactors that are operational, nuclear power will supply the nation with the equivalent of the four-and-a-half million barrels of oil per day that President Carter wants to squeeze out of our imports by 1990.

It is quite clear that the President's Commission has given us and the American public a simple message on nuclear power: proceed, but proceed with caution.

## Utilities accept responsibility for safety.

The Kemeny Commission has performed a major public service. It has undertaken a huge assignment and approached it in a tough-minded fashion. We stand ready to assist the administration and the Congress in evaluating and implementing the recommendations of the report.

Underlying the recommendations is the view that regulation alone will not guarantee safety. We agree. Ultimately, as the report states, the operational safety of nuclear power plants is the responsibility of the licensee. We accept the responsibility.